



Child Safety¹

William J. Becker²

"The country is a great place to raise kids." How many times have you heard that comment? Certainly, there are advantages to growing up on a farm or in a rural area; but there are disadvantages, too—there are hazards to their health.

And we, as adults, are part of the problem. Review Table 1 below. Would you agree that six-year-old children should be allowed to ride on a tractor with a parent? Would you agree that twelve-year-old children are mature enough to operate a tractor? If you do, you may be hazardous to the health of your child!

KID SAFETY ON THE FARM

There are many hazards to children living on farms and in rural areas—hazards that are attractive, fun, dangerous and deadly. There are children riding on tractors or driving tractors at too young an age. Kids can be seen riding on the back of trucks, driving adult-sized ATV's at high speeds, riding on the top of loads of hay, grain or other produce.

We see kids, **unattended**, around livestock, horses, playing along the banks of ponds, canals and streams. There are kids playing with, working with, power tools which are much too dangerous for them.

Review Table 2. What does it tell us? It tells us that children, ages 5 to 14, who spend the same amount of time in a work area (not necessarily

working) as their older brothers, sisters or parents, are two to five times more likely to be involved in an accident, be injured or killed.

Many children are too immature or lack the physical and mental development to work, play, or even be in the work area. Keep them away from dangerous environments and activities.

Fifteen Steps to Child Safety on the Farm

1. Do not allow children as extra riders on equipment.
2. Do not allow children to play with idle machinery.
3. Leave any equipment that might fall—such as front end loaders—in the down position.
4. When self-propelled machinery is parked, brakes should be locked and keys removed from the ignition.
5. Always leave a tractor PTO in neutral.
6. When starting machinery—and especially when reversing it—know where the children are.
7. Maintain machinery in good repair, particularly protective shields, ROPS, and seat belts.
8. Do not permit kids to operate machinery until they have completed safety training.
9. Fence farm ponds and manure pits.
10. Place fixed ladders out of reach, or fit with a special barrier; store portable ladders away from danger areas.
11. Shield dangerous machinery components and electrical boxes and wiring and place out of reach of small children, or fit with locking devices.
12. Store chemicals and pesticides in a locked area.
13. Place warning decals on all grain bins, wagons and trucks.
14. Maintain lights and reflectors for all equipment used on roads.
15. Devote a day to family safety instructions and rules.

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1. This document was published 11/91 as Fact Sheet AE-1, Florida Cooperative Extension Service. For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office.
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Table 1. Ages parents think children should be around machinery

Behavior	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	Av. Age
Ride Tractor with Parent	29%	36%	14%	18%	2%	6 yrs
Operate Tractor	0%	3%	10%	54%	28%	12 yrs
Be within 10' of machines	1%	4%	11%	41%	33%	12 yrs
Percentage of parents who feel that children in each group should be allowed to begin doing each activity						

Table 2. High farm accident rate for kids

Age	Accident Rate
5-14	35.6
15-24	14.2
25-44	10.3
45-64	6.6
65+	10.2
1988 Accident Study 500 Farm Survey.	